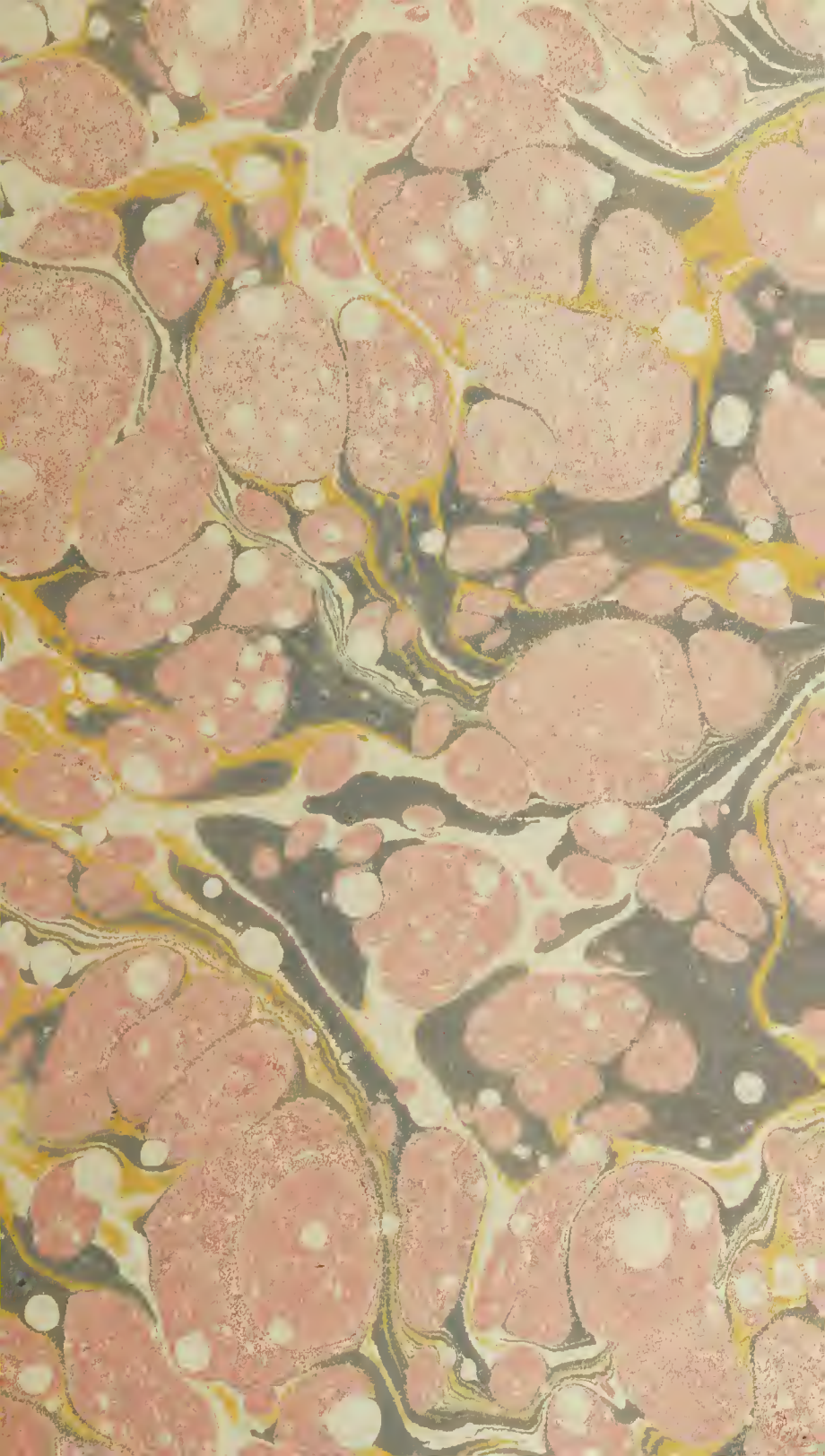




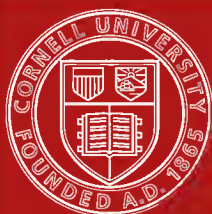
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MR. LUCKEY'S
Election Sermon.

A
SERMON,
ADDRESSED TO THE LEGISLATURE
OF
CONNECTICUT,
AT THE
ANNUAL ELECTION
IN
NEW-HAVEN,

MAY 5th, 1824.

—◆◆—
BY THE REV. SAMUEL LUCKEY,
Minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church in New-Haven,
—◆◆—

NEW-HAVEN:

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE LEGISLATURE.

J. Barber, printer.

1824.

Fa

At a General Assembly of the State of Connecticut, holden at New-Haven in said State, on the first Wednesday of May, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty-four :

RESOLVED, That the Hon. Mr. Moseley, and Cornelius Tuthill, Esq. be a committee to present the thanks of this Assembly to the Rev. Samuel Luckey, for the Sermon delivered by him before the Assembly, at the opening of the session, and to request a copy thereof, that it may be printed.

A true copy of record,

Examined by

THOMAS DAY, Secretary.

SERMON.



DEUTERONOMY IV. 6.

Keep, therefore, and do them ; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear of these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

THESE words were addressed to the Jews at the most interesting period of their political existence. Moses, whose example of patriotism justifies an ardent love of country in all good men, had renounced the flattering titles which displayed their imposing charms at the proudest court in the world, “choosing rather to suffer affliction with his” native brethren, “than to enjoy the pleasures of sin” among their oppressive enemies. He was long their political and religious teacher ; and when about to leave them, instructed them faithfully in the will of God concerning the rules of conduct which would render them respected and happy ; and enforced upon them the observance of those rules. The statutes which he admonished them to obey, embraced the substance of true morality, which has its foundation in the laws of nature, and is alike essential to the happiness and prosperity of society in all nations and ages of the world.

Without supposing it impossible to maintain the morality of these statutes under a monarchy, into which this nation afterwards degenerated, it cannot be doubted that the mode of administration pointed out by their prophet, was better suited to the object of right government, and approached nearer a perfect theocracy, than any other. If, then, we advert to this history to prove the divinity of any form of government, we should fix on a period in it when it obviously answered best the object for which government was instituted, and was in its least degree removed from the direct superintendence of the Deity.

For this purpose, we would fix on any previous period, rather than that at which they determined that they would have a king. The history of that event proves indeed the liberty of the people to choose their form of government, and their responsibility for the choice they should make. It proves that the act of determining to have a king,

was evidence that they had rejected the Lord, and renounced the principles which he had ordained to promote their happiness and prosperity. It proves that a king was given them as a punishment, who would reduce them to a state of vassalage, employ them in his own service, and plunge them into a thousand miseries. It proves, in a word, not the divine right of kings, but every thing the reverse of it.

We maintain this position from the terms in which the event is spoken of in the scriptures : We maintain it also from the subsequent history of that nation. Their first sovereign, when invested with the power, soon acquired the spirit of a tyrant. Jealousy and revenge rankled in his bosom against his most useful and virtuous subjects ; and he fell at last a victim to his own capricious spleen. The second, from being a man after God's own heart, was transformed by the magic influence of a throne, into a deliberate adulterer and murderer, and laid a foundation for bitter repentance. The third, though a wise politician, extended by his example the liberties of the crown to the widest range of libidinous indulgence and sensual gratification, sacrificing together his honour and his innocence. And the fourth, approaching nearer the time when the operative influence of their errors had prepared them for their ultimate results, divided the nation, demolished their altars, built up the high places of idolatry, extended and established his state religion, by making priests of the lower orders of the people, suited to his inclinations and dependent on his royal pleasure, and laid a foundation for the destruction of the house of Israel. Thenceforward there was not so much as one virtuous prince in Israel ; and very few in Judah. And at this moment the condition of the Jewish people exemplifies the truth of those denunciations which were uttered against them by their prophet, in case of disobedience to the statutes of true morality.

Upon such neglect, we justly charge their misery and their ruin. And it was in view of this consequence of rejecting the Lord and following their own ways, that Moses, dictated by the spirit of inspiration, warned them of their danger, and admonished them to shun it. He employed every motive which could move their feelings and affect their hearts. By pointing out with the utmost precision the miseries which would follow a course of disobedience and rebellion, he endeavoured to alarm their fears, and convince them that in neglect of the plain principles of moral truth, religion itself would be only a name, and its ceremonies the mere badges of hypocrisy and superstition—that in such a state, the God of justice would frown upon, and curse them as a nation. And by holding up to view the happy consequences of obedience and submission, he endeavoured to inspire

them with a desire to preserve a character and reputation which would secure the favour of heaven, and render them respected and happy in the midst of surrounding nations. "Keep, therefore, and do them," said he, "for this is your wisdom in the sight of the nations." I have detained you with these remarks, as necessary to show the leading doctrine of the text, from which I shall deduce this single proposition :

That a correct public morality, is essential to render a nation respected and happy.

The truth of our proposition will appear evident, if we consider the influence which principles, formed into a system of government, and observed in the administration of it, have on the character and condition of the people under such government. The moral character of a system of government may be determined with little less certainty than that of an individual. That which is most consistent with the will of God, and tends in the greatest degree to promote the duties of justice, benevolence and piety, is most moral ; that which is farthest removed from this standard, is least so.

Like all other moral principles, those which relate to government, have their first existence in the heart. In this incipient state, in which they must be viewed, to determine their elementary qualities, I can admit of but two kinds ; those which are despotic, or those which are liberal. Pride is the disposition in which despotism is founded : liberal principles are the offspring of that benevolence which is dictated by an enlightened morality, and a feeling heart. The first associates with it, invidious distinctions, unjust oppressions, cruelty, and the whole catalogue of human crimes and human woes. The other unites in its sacred compact, piety and justice, equal rights and privileges, humanity and mercy, and the whole train of social virtues and social felicities.

The first laws of despotism are injustice and oppression. The pride which produces it, can never be satisfied with equal rights and privileges. It requires that one portion of the community be reduced to a state of poverty and degradation, to support the other in splendour and prodigality ; and thus render their elevation conspicuous by the contrast. It is absolute no where, because while it is unbounded in its claims, it is limited in the means to enforce them. The man who is vile enough to yield a willing submission to the spirit of despotism, would, if he could, usurp the Throne of the Eternal, and control the destinies of the universe ! But there is a check upon this arrogant principle ; for its benefits must be distributed among a suffi-

cient number of the community, to keep the rest in subjection. But what is it to those whose rights it usurps, how its powers are organized and its benefits distributed? A wealthy Senate, by the influence of their money; or an aspiring triumvirate, by the energy of its military operations; or a proud sovereign, by a profuse display of his royal favours, exercised by the spirit of despotism, would equally oppress and degrade them. In whatever form it appears, where it obtains a permanent existence, you may witness its want of true morality. How unjust and oppressive in all its bearings is the feudal policy—that policy which cannot exist without an extensive train of lords, and nobles, and titled gentry, raised above the wants of life by the people's money, to restrain them from asserting their rights?—How unjust and oppressive is that policy which invades the rights of conscience, by fire and sword, to compel a support of an imperious hierarchy, for the purpose of preventing the people from thinking and acting for themselves in matters of religion? In Russia, which stands first among the despotic governments of christian nations, and the greatest half of whose constitution is occupied by titles of nobility, you may see an exemplification of the first. In Spain, little less distinguished for its despotism, you may see the other. As this injustice, to answer the purposes for which it is practised, must be so augmented as to influence a sufficient portion of the community to coerce the rest into submission, it becomes a national characteristic.

“But such an influence is necessary,” say apologists, to “prevent the people from ruining themselves.” What! national injustice essential to prevent national ruin? It is a solecism in language! It is a libel upon the God of justice! To “do evil that good may come,” can never be made a just maxim in public or private morality. The apology proves only, if it prove any thing, that the injustice of the principle may unfit a people, by the ignorance and degradation it occasions, for the exercise of their natural rights; and thus, without a torture of logic, transfer to its own account the crime with all its turpitude.

But do not despotic sovereigns often speak of the happiness and prosperity of the people in their dominions, with apparent interest and feeling? Yes—as gravely as though they were sincere. When the splendor of the court is maintained, and the crown is considered safe, and disaffected nobles are restored to loyalty by preferment or bribery; when factionists, driven to acts of desperation by the agonizing cries of their famished children, are suppressed, and their leaders imprisoned or executed; and when the distressed multitudes are awed

into silence by the iron arm of a military force, kept for that purpose upon the bread for which they are starving, then each of their royal majesties, is prepared to inform his lords and nobles, and the world through them, that peace and prosperity reign in his dominions, and that he is the favoured sovereign of a happy and contented people!

But as evidence in this matter, words and actions are to be differently estimated. "By their works ye shall know them," said the best of all judges. To this evidence we appeal for the truth of the fact, that despots and the advocates of despotism, are conscious of the injustice of their policy, and of its total insufficiency to render the people happy. If not, why keep them in ignorance, lest they should know their rights, and assert them? Why maintain extensive military establishments, and employ them to suppress every progressive plan of reform or revolution? Why assume to dictate in matters of government, to a people destined by their natural situation, to be free from their influence? What could have induced the sovereigns of continental Europe to unite in a league, sacreligiously called "the Holy Alliance," but a consciousness of the injustice of their claims, and a secret persuasion that their united strength would be necessary to continue their subjects in servile subordination, as they became better acquainted with their rights? What else could have induced these advocates of "legitimacy" to interfere in restoring Ferdinand, contrary to the wishes of his subjects, to the despotic power of which they had for their safety and happiness deprived him? Why every where oppose the march of liberty, and compass sea and land to accomplish their work of desolation and misery? If it be a correct principle in moral philosophy, and correct it is, that the happiness of the people is the true object of right government, that must be extremely far from it which requires such extensive preparations and potent means to prevent them from modifying it to suit themselves. And do not such preparations prove a conviction in those who make them, that the policy they aim to uphold is not calculated to render the people happy; and that it is therefore unjust and oppressive? Yes; despots themselves know that their policy is morally corrupt. If such be the fountain, who will answer for the purity of the streams which issue from it?

An undisputed maxim in morality, will authorize us to estimate the character of despotism by its tendency. In the midst of the intrigues, and oppressions, and voluptuousness, and revellings of its privileged orders, in vain do we look for that personal morality which the gospel requires. A criminal waste of time and money, enervated fac-

ties, ruined constitutions, licentiousness of principle, corruption of heart and life, impiety towards God, and a proud and sovereign contempt of the poor, are the natural consequences of such a condition. On the other hand, the extreme poverty, ignorance, degradation and sufferings of the oppressed, discourage them from labour and enterprize; habituate them to erroneous and contemptible views of their Creator, themselves, and their duties; inspire them with feelings of indignation against the imperious usurpers of their rights; corrupt their affections, and tend to promote dissipation, and all the dissolute practices of low and idle life. Both these extremes are alike destructive of those dignified sentiments and habits of true morality, which the happy medium only, is calculated to produce. "Give me neither poverty nor riches," said an inspired saint, "lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

To these extremes of condition, into which despotism separates men who "are born free and equal," we trace the true cause of those discontents, riots, rebellions and massacres, which have in continual succession convulsed those dominions where it has prevailed. This spirit, too, has a tendency to promote unnecessary and oppressive wars. It has been the general policy of those exercised by it, to silence the complaints of the people, and divert their attention from the injustice practised upon them, by keeping them employed in perpetual struggles with other powers. Restrained by no law but conscious impotence, they have ruined the peace and happiness of weak and inoffensive communities, and butchered their millions, for no other crime than being unable to resist them. But besides the injustice and cruelty of it, what a train of moral evils follow a constant succession of wars, projected by ambition and prosecuted without regard to mercy or purity! Moral corruption, which spreads its influence in every direction, is not among the least evils of a war of any description, however just its cause or short its duration. To what an extent then are public and private morals vitiated, by having a great portion of a community constantly in arms, and influencing them to violence by the rewards of plunder, and an indulgence in all the vile passions which can reduce man to a brute, and the brute to a demon? Intoxication, and obscenity, and thefts, and murders, and all descriptions of crime, prevail with rapid success, until they overpower every opposing influence, and carry away the multitude in the resistless torrent. Consider, too, the effect of rapine and carnage upon the natural affections. Familiarized to blood and

massacre, and fired with the ambition which insinuates itself into every heart, and transfuses itself through every part of a tyrant's forces, friends array themselves against friends—sons meditate the murder of their fathers—fathers pass sentence against their sons, and witness their execution without emotion; and brothers shed the heart's blood of their affectionate sisters, only for the offence of retaining the innocent sensibilities which they themselves have lost. Thus these results dissolve the tender ligaments which unite the members of the same family, and ruin those domestic felicities for which alone life is desirable, and liberty pre-eminently a blessing. Save us, God of mercy and goodness, save us from such bloody tragedies—from their cause—from their consequences !

But in nothing do we trace the desolations of this spirit with such palpable precision and painful sensations, as in the sanctuary of religion. Here it taints, and withers, and ruins, all it touches. What else could have produced so extraordinary a change in the moral character of the christian church, as has been witnessed since its establishment by its divine author? Its first principles are "peace on earth, and good will towards men." These were most perfectly exemplified in the life and condition of its founder, and strenuously observed by his immediate followers in the work of the ministry. Standing at its portals, and pointing to its altar and its mercy seat, they directed thither the guilty, broken-hearted, and wretched sinners, who sought an asylum from their woes. "We seek not yours," said they, "but you." In the midst of oppositions, and poverty, and persecutions, they were the friends of the friendless, the advocates of the oppressed, the instructors of the ignorant, and the stern supporters of every moral virtue. The blessed influence of their lives and labours, caused tyrants, whose spirit was at the widest remove from theirs, to direct their vindictive rage against them. Nor was it otherwise during the whole term in which the example of Christ and the Apostles was observed by the ministers of the cross. But how soon was there cause to exclaim with the prophet, "How is the gold become dim ! the most fine gold changed ! The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers !—The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world would not have believed, that the adversary and the enemy should have entered into the gates of Jerusalem" together !

And what has been the result of this collusion ?—a triumph of the spirit of the gospel over that of tyranny and injustice ? No ; directly the reverse ! I have no time—no disposition, to detain you with a

detailed account of the cruelties and abominations practised, for more than a thousand years, in the name of religion, and by its professed teachers. When I see them in pomp and splendor, assuming the power and monopolizing the wealth of nations ; when I view before them a degraded multitude, defrauded of the word of life, and drilled through a thousand superstitious and corrupting ceremonies, into an awful dread of their king, or of acting contrary to the dictates of their lordly masters ; when I think of the vindictive cruelties and appalling horrors of the Inquisition, and the prevalence of vice and corruption in the place consecrated to virtue and purity, my feelings recoil with emotions which I cannot describe :—

“Not hell, tho’ hell’s black jaws in sunder part,
And breathe blue fire, could more assault my heart.”

Almost literally, the house of prayer has been made a den of thieves ; and justice, and humanity, and the whole train of the moral virtues which adorned it, banished by new inventions of torture and cruelty. You know the history of “Spiritual wickedness in high places”—an adequate description of it exceeds the power of language. It appertains to my present purpose only to show, that this desolation of moral principle in the church, was the work of despotic influence.

While the ministers of religion were the ministers of Christ, and regarded the interests of the sanctuary, they were marked by tyrants with a jealous enmity : but when their wealth and corruption distinguished them as fit instruments to promote the ambitious views of these very enemies, they were marked as the subjects of preferment and reward. If Judas, when influenced by the love of the world, could betray his divine master, in full view of his miracles and his innocence, for the paltry consideration of thirty pieces of silver, is it wonderful that there should be found in an age of apostacy and corruption, a sufficient number, who, for thirty thousand pieces, would betray his innocent cause ? And why should we not expect to find malignant apostates seven-fold more the children of hell than they were before their religious profession ? Christianity was the sufferer, then, when tyrants assumed it. The spirit of despotism insinuated itself through the whole combination. But the increased wealth and power of the church, accumulated by its mendicant operations, and an extensive trade in indulgences and pardons, under pretences which a superstitious and ignorant people considered sacred, soon fixed the principal seat of oppressive tyranny in the sanctuary ; and all Europe groaned under its chains and trembled at its thunders. Shall I be disputed, then, when I say that this spirit is, in its tendency, destructive of the pure principles of morality ?

That the hierarchy esteem despotism as essential to their support in the work of desolation and misery, is clear from every view of the subject. What else could occasion their uniform and unyielding hostility against liberal principles? Have they not identified their own interests with the success of tyrants? Look at Spain; while the people were contending for their rights against the enormous claims and prescriptions of their united enemies. Who were avowedly the enemies of liberal principles, and denounced the constitution as "a monster conceived in hell," and hostile to the court of faith—the inquisition? Who inflamed the multitude violently to suppress it, and to restore by the aid of foreign influence, the tyranny which carries with it death and destruction wherever it prevails? Who rejoiced at the triumphs of despotism over liberal principles, and considered the victory as decidedly their own? The clergy, whom despotism had enlisted by an unjust but characteristic distribution of its favours; who depended on its protection for the means of keeping the people in ignorance and imposing upon them with all their arts and impiety; who received as a reward for their services, the control and application of immense funds, with exemptions from taxation and other public duties; and who knew that nothing but the energies of this unjust policy, could continue them in possession of these means to gratify their ambition and practise their abominations.

One thought more on this point. To what was the infidelity which threatened an entire destruction to moral principle in Europe attributable, but the abominations practised under the christian name and in support of the cause of despotism? Is it believed that this dangerous alternative would have been adopted, if the pure principles of christianity had been preserved in the church?—But I must forbear. The theme will lead me beyond the limits of my time. I only ask, is it not clear from every view of the subject, that the spirit of despotism is incompatible with those principles of true morality which are essential to render society happy?

It consists with our proposition to say, that in exact proportion as liberal principles, founded in a correct morality, have obtained in any country, that country has been prosperous and happy. Why are some nations less corrupt, degraded, and miserable, than others? Why, for example, is England less ignorant and degraded than Russia—less barbarous and wretched than Turkey—less corrupt and oppressed than Spain? Not because an equal degree of despotic influence would not make it as much so; nor yet because there were never in that nation individuals who would have exerted such an influence to as great an extent, had they been permitted to; but briefly because the

people had the intelligence to discover their rights, and the firmness to secure a portion of them by adequate provisions of their own.

But to exemplify the truth of our premises, we appeal to our own government, as forming a more perfect contrast with despotism. A just view of the rights of men and the oppressions of despots, inspired the projectors of our independence to design and effect its accomplishment. Whatever was done to preserve to the people at home a portion of their rights, it is certain that tyranny and oppression were exercised towards the colonies. Urged on by these to a point beyond which patience would have been a crime, the enlightened friends of freedom took a firm position, from which the potency of their integrity would not allow them to be driven. They appealed to their sovereign, but they were rejected. They appealed to their God, and were approved. They appealed to their arms, and were free.

This was an eventful era. At a time when enlightened principles and correct feelings had conducted them through the vicissitudes of a precarious war, and were endeared to them by the things they had suffered—when their united efforts in opposing the common enemy, and united ecstasies in hailing the common victory, had warmed and cemented their hearts, and excluded every vestige of those mutual animosities which affect communities under different circumstances—at this interesting juncture they were free from the restraints of imperious dictators, to provide for the protection and perpetuity of those principles which were dearer to them than life. In the articles containing this provision, we find every thing the reverse of that moral corruption which associates itself with the spirit and principles of despotism. The spirit of a correct morality is transfused through all our national institutions, and guarded by every possible means that human wisdom could devise, or human prerogative control.

In respect to religion, they recognize the government of God, and an entire dependence on him for present and future happiness; and denounce religious tests and all other infractions of the rights of conscience. They decline ostentation in all matters of church and state, and afford every possible facility to the promotion of correct worship, according to the simplicity of the gospel; and a purity of heart and life in the subjects of grace.

In social life, they encourage the exercise of the relative virtues, cherish the sympathies of our nature, strengthen the bonds by which the members of every separate neighborhood are united, and suppress pomp, and luxury, and licentiousness, and all the corrupting habits of vice. And in principle, they acknowledge the sovereignty

of the people, and provide for a change of their forms when they shall cease to answer the end for which they were adopted, without the desperate expedient of a contested revolution, carried by blood and slaughter. They authorize no formidable aristocracies, created and upheld by a wretched feudal system, to exert a pernicious influence in the destruction of public virtue and social happiness ; but encourage industry and enterprize in every citizen, by rendering their rewards practicable to all.

In our civil and criminal codes, justice and humanity are most happily blended. While they are “ a terror to evil doers,” they protect the innocent in the enjoyment of life, liberty, and the pursuits of happiness. Excluding bills of attainder and retrospective laws of all kinds, and retaining the invincible habeas corpus, they are as a guardian angel against the revengeful spleen of cruel and designing enemies. And even criminals themselves must acknowledge a relative excellence in their solemn protestations against vindictive and extreme torture in punishment. By a sanctuary of justice, open to all classes of citizens, to prefer their claims and vindicate their rights, we are protected from those inhuman and unjust oppressions practised in many other countries, to the disgrace of human nature, and the extinction of every moral principle.

From a view of its coincidence with the will of God, the entire policy of our national organization has been denominated a theocracy. The happy distribution of the powers of government, balanced and guarded on every side, imposes restraints upon an undue ambition, which none can break through without the consent of the people. Under the broad wings of this eagle of liberty, all wanton sacrifice of life and property is prohibited, and the peaceful citizen may sit down quietly in the circle of his family, knowing that the executive can devise no scheme, the legislature enact no law, the judge pass no sentence, to deprive him of his rights, contrary to the rules of justice and equity.

By their tendency we may justly estimate the moral character of our national institutions. As the happiness of the people is the object of right government, we appeal to all the world to say, in the face of the theories and reasonings of political enemies, whether any other nation equals our own in this respect. Did the inspired author of our text stand among us to-day, as he stood among God’s ancient people on the day he delivered unto them his solemn valedictory, would he not close his pathetic farewell in the use of the same apostrophe :—“ Who is like unto thee, O people. saved by the Lord—the

shield of thy help, and the sword of thy excellency !"—Mark the benevolent provisions which are every where made for the suffering poor.—Mark, too, the national gratitude exercised towards the procurers of our liberties. When we see the war-worn veteran trembling over his staff, under the weight of complicated infirmities, bearing away the pittance allotted him by his grateful country, to bless his declining years, we involuntarily shed the tear he suppresses, and turn aside to give thanks to God, that our lines have fallen unto us in such pleasant places.

The fact that national happiness results from the moral principles in which our institutions are founded, has conquered the prejudices of their former enemies, and procured concessions which nothing but the most irresistible evidence could have extorted. In reply to the insinuations of interested casuists concerning the inherent weakness of these institutions, hear the animated declaration of one from whom they would once have been least expected, uttered in the midst of loud peals of applause, by a people once taught to despise them with contempt.—"To these," says the foreigner, "we need not now answer by words, or by reference to past and questionable examples—but we put them down at once, and trample them contemptuously to the earth, by a short appeal to the existence and condition of America. What is the country of the universe, I would ask, in which property is most sacred, or industry most sure of reward? Where are intelligence and wealth most widely diffused and most rapidly progressive? Where is the authority of the law most omnipotent? Where is society in its general description, most peaceable, and orderly, and moral, and contented? Where are popular tumults least known, and the spirit and existence, and almost the name of a mob, least heard of?—Where, but in America—America, with universal suffrage, and monthly or weekly elections, with a free and unlicensed press, without an established priesthood, and hereditary nobility, or a permanent executive—with all that is combustible and pregnant with danger on the hypothesis of tyranny, and without one of the checks or safe-guards by which alone they contend that the benefits of society can be maintained!"

Here we have an exemplification of the fact, that a correct morality will render a nation respected and happy. To determine that it is essential to this end, we need only contrast our situation with that of those under the influence of opposite principles. Think of African kings and Turkish Emperors, striking off the heads of their vassals, to display their dexterity or settle a controversy

about arteries and veins ; think of faithful subjects barbarously murdered by the vindictive decrees of unfeeling despots, for their unsuccessful efforts to serve their country and preserve their rights ; think of subjects massacring their fellow subjects at broad noon-day, and quietly sitting down in their presence, in sight of the city guards ; think of the trembling innocents, arraigned at the horrible tribunal of the Inquisition, to answer with their lives for the integrity of their hearts ; think, in a word, of the acrimonious contentions, persecutions, hypocrisy and oppressions, of a religion adopted and maintained to support despotism—and then say whether the spirit which pervades our institutions is not essential to render a nation respected and happy. Here we feel none of these woes. The humblest citizen may appeal to the laws against the aggressions of the proudest enemy ; and his appeal will be heard. Here we may repose under our own vines and fig-trees, and worship God according to the dictates of our own consciences, while none are authorized to molest or make us afraid. Raised above the ignorance and superstition, and removed from the political causes, which have soured a religious zeal into personal animosity, we may convince the world how little differences of opinion really affect the benevolence of a liberal and religious heart ; how christians with all their variety of opinions and forms, may join to celebrate the praise of their common Lord, and unite their efforts to promote the great principles of religion and morality ; and how all this may be done, “ without partiality and without hypocrisy.” Thus we think our proposition must appear evident, “ that a correct public morality is essential to render a nation respected and happy.”

We shall now attend to some reflections which naturally occur from the subject.

1. There are many things which invite our attention, as having a natural influence in directing and controlling public morals.

It is certain that national characteristics should be estimated principally by national institutions, while those institutions are respected and efficacious. But they are so no longer than they are in unison with the prevailing sentiments and feelings of the people. Let opposing principles obtain an ascendancy in the public mind, and these institutions will loose all their force. Our subject then suggests the propriety of cultivating a high regard for that policy of government under which alone we can be happy. For this cause the people of Israel were directed to instruct their children, and their children's children, into the true import of the monument erected in memory of

what the Lord had done for them in bringing them out of the land of bondage. And is there not equal reason for us to direct the minds of the rising generation by every possible means, to the monuments which our fathers have erected in memory of what God has wrought for us ?

Education has a material influence in this matter. The first rudiments of it are acquired at an age when we imbibe sentiments which in after life we call our own. It ought therefore to be as general as possible, and of a kind best calculated to produce sentiments favourable to a correct morality. It will be acknowledged to the credit of this State, that its munificence in supporting our common schools, has done much towards the furtherance of this object ; and the diligence of some of our citizens in furnishing systems of instruction, replete with the principles in which our civil rights are founded, promise a reward worthy of such a labour. But is it fit that a lax morality of foreign production, conforming in its phraseology to a monarchy only, and employing its subtle reasonings in favour of religious establishments, should obtain in our higher schools, and mingle in the fountain whose streams are destined to make their way to every part of the community, with all their relative purity or poison ?

Knowledge and virtue have been denominated the basis of republican institutions. Hence an extension of the means of literary acquirements, is justly esteemed as a wise policy. But its efficacy depends more upon the judicious management than the existence of such means. The first care should be, to raise every citizen above that state of ignorance which will subject him to the impositions of designing demagogues and false teachers. This work will also prepare the way for many a brilliant genius, (which otherwise might remain buried in the rubbish,) to display its native energies in imitation of our own Franklin and Henry, whose influence in the cause of public virtue can never be fully estimated, until the day when "wisdom shall be justified of her children." In the higher branches, a knowledge of the useful arts and sciences, and an impression of the importance of industry in the application of such knowledge, promise most as a reward to the public for the patronage it gives to literature. Let an education serve only to raise a man in his own view above a life of industry, and he will be a public pauper, of the most expensive and deleterious kind. He will make no calculation other than to live in style, by the credit of his diploma, upon the labour of others. A multiplicity of such in any nation, would be as the locusts of Egypt. Their avarice and indolence would be equal inducements for them to employ their talents in devising plans to secure their own interests,

and extend their power and privileges by every possible means. Suffer them to combine their arts under some specious name, to increase their reputation and numbers, and to spread themselves through the community, with their sameness of views, and feelings, and interests—suffer them to obtain a controlling influence over literary institutions, immense funds, and the superstitions of the unsuspicious multitude, and the present condition of Spain will show you what they would constitute any nation in the world. Should the national institutions form a barrier against their operations, they might imagine a removal of the impediment, by inculcating an insinuation that the organization was defective at its vitals, and that the radical remedy they would apply, would settle it on a rock. In the spirit of extending literary knowledge, then, by means of public munificence or individual charity, the seeds should indeed be sown with a liberal hand, but by all means in a soil calculated to yield a productive harvest. In the midst of the good feelings and general confidence which prevail in this country, we may summon our thoughts to this point when it is too late.

As industry and frugality have an extensive influence in promoting good morals, our subject suggests the importance of affording them every suitable encouragement. “The gods,” says Hesiod, “have placed labour before virtue.” We know well the consequences of idleness to community. Whether aversion to labour be occasioned by a natural indolence, or an odium which has been attached to it by those who would employ it as a mark of distinction between the gentleman and the peasant, it is the true source from which half the crimes which corrupt society flow. Idle heads and idle hands, are the fittest instruments for the devil’s service. In promoting industry, much depends upon the encouragement given to those pursuits which afford employ to the greatest number of labourers, and the credit in which the public consent to hold them. The efficacy of our institutions depends much upon this single point. The man who can insinuate an invidious mark of distinction, and desire to have the labourer circumscribed in his wages and privileges, to render the contrast between him and his imperious employer the more extended and conspicuous, is an enemy to the first principles of true liberty. Give him power, and he has the heart to be a tyrant.

But public morality is in danger from another source. The pride of ostentation is a prevailing passion. And in a country where there is no legal barrier to prevent all men from occupying the same rank, examples of luxury, especially in men high in the public confidence,

are extremely injurious. They will spread their baneful influence to the ruin of thousands, who are carried away in the mad torrent of a vain emulation. Are not half the failures which occur in our country, owing principally to this cause? These always affect a number of the industrious poor. They can esteem it little less than direct fraud. When they reflect upon the prodigality of their debtors in all the circles of fashionable life, and perhaps an affected superiority even under the pressure of insolvency, it embitters the feelings of plain and honest creditors, and weakens the spirit of social friendship, which is essential to the happiness of any community. Besides, the mind that is a slave to fashion, is a stranger to true religion, and disqualified for any worthy pursuit. Every degree of excess is dangerous. The table of the voluptuary is covered with poison. His associates are contaminated by his example. The politest circles degenerate into occasions of revelry and crime. And men of wealth and influence in the community are daily falling a sacrifice to excess and dissipation. Public morals are corrupted as far as this influence extends; and the peace and happiness of society are placed in the most imminent danger. This is not chimerical. Demosthenes predicted the ruin of the republic of Greece from this very cause. It was in vain that he pointed the rulers, who set the example, to the stern frugality of Aristides and Miltiades, as essential to that vigorous morality which alone could rescue their liberties. The evil was too deeply rooted, and ultimately terminated in the entire desolation of all that distinguished them as a free and happy people. The fact should admonish us to beware. Pomp and show, the beginnings of these evils, are incompatible with the spirit of our institutions, and will certainly prove deleterious. Let them be discountenanced in every department of the government, and strenuously avoided in private life. The fashionable world may plead impunity, by a secret appeal to the execrable laws of honour. The sovereign voice of the people alone can check the destructive evil, and prevent its consequences.

As public opinion decides every thing in a republican government, the principal means by which it is formed and directed is matter of interesting consideration. The press is perhaps paramount to every other means. How important is it, then, that it should be preserved from corruption? It must be free, and accountable for the use of its liberties to the public whom it serves. A licensed or restricted press is upon the very face of it an instrument of corruption, to promote the unjust claims of its authors and supporters; and the fact of its being exempted from the scrutiny of a general investigation, proves

that such is its design. Hence a free press has always been considered as essential in a system of government adopted for the benefit of the people. And upon them devolves the responsibility of rendering it instrumental of good, in promoting our civil and religious institutions. Incidental errors are unavoidable, and claim the indulgence of the public. But an obvious design to give a false direction to the public mind, to subserve party or private purposes, deserves to be reprobated by every friend of good morals.

There never was a time when this subject demanded more imperiously the attention of the public. The first object of an ambitious individual, who aspires after office without such claims of merit as would recommend him to the attention of the people, is most naturally to enlist the public journals on his side. By the influence of an artful agency, strong motives may be held out to give a direction to these streams which are designed to affect whole regions in their course. These things perhaps can never be avoided. The only remedy is in the intelligence and decision of the public. Let it once occur, that newspapers shall be read with an implicit confidence in the correctness of all they say, and without discrimination between those which preserve truth, and those who disregard it; or let each be equally patronized, with a total indifference to this discrepancy of moral character, and a door will be set open to a species of corruption, the extent of whose contaminating influence, none can safely predict. On this occasion I cannot decline a free and open declaration of my feelings and my fears. In an age of the prevalence of literary, political and religious publications, appearances will justify suspicion, and suspicions authorize investigation.

When we see an extensively circulating work, studiously conducted to promote the interests of one party, and detract from the just merits of others; when it opposes a bold front against open denials of assumed facts, and demonstrations of the falsehood of its leading contents, and perseveres in silent contempt of such denials and demonstrations; and when its readers are every where heard to quote these disputed contents as if they were unquestionable, and seem to adhere with a servile pertinacity to the line of conduct they prescribe, it is a subject of alarm to all who feel interested in the prevalence of true morality. No specious professions of friendship, or pretensions to union of feeling and interest, can prevent jealousies, loss of confidence, and a consequent destruction of christian harmony and fellowship, under the influence of such suspicious proceedings. It is impossible that it should be otherwise. There is no law which re-

quires a good man to misplace his confidence. Understanding the rules of true liberality, he knows how to differ in *opinion*, and still preserve a harmony of *feeling*. But he cannot without a prostration of moral integrity, extend this tolerance to differences on plain matters of *fact*. Here he must be invincible. While he is willing to unite in every laudable measure to promote the general interests of morality and religion, when nothing interferes but a few doctrinal opinions which he may not deem essential to salvation, it is in vain that you summon him under any responsibilities, to unite with a party, directing the weapons of their warfare at the interests which he holds most sacred. No responsibilities can influence him to become accessory in such a cause. He disregards alike the flatteries and the frowns of zealous partizans. His conscience acquits him before his God. And he acts too, with other views than the promotion of any separate party to which he himself may be attached. If the facts which are opposed to false intelligence are neglected, and such intelligence accredited, in consequence of the subtlety of party prejudices, he perceives that the same cause with equal assiduity to render it so, may produce a similar effect in all cases ; and truth and reason will no longer be the effectual weapons to oppose falsehood and error. Then shall we hasten on to the day when others will probably be employed. He perceives, too, that if the sacredness of sectarian or party interests can exempt any publication from being denounced as corrupt, and unworthy of support, under the imputation of a persevering course in error and falsehood, prostration of moral principle has obtained impunity under one form to succeed under another, until the lamentation shall be uttered with an appropriate fitness, " judgment is turned backward, and justice standeth afar off, and truth is fallen in the streets, and equity cannot enter." I appeal to you, are such views and apprehensions without foundation ? Under the palpable imputation of such facts, no publication should escape the denunciations of a moral community, though it be inscribed with the christian name, and cover the multitude of its sins with the mantle of *charity*.

But can we consider our institutions out of the way of danger from a spirit of direct hostility against them ? If a spy can find protection in the bosom of any country in the day of national calamity, and a council be held to meditate plans of operation, too secret to be understood at home, and too certain to be mistaken abroad, can that country be free from internal enemies ? We have only to say, that an undue spirit of ambition for rule and power is the most ostensible

evidence of a secret hostility to those institutions whose object is equal rights and privileges. The use of rulers is to preserve these rights and privileges. In a government like ours, while the people regard them, they will feel an interest in promoting to office, none but such as will protect them. A disregard to this is fearful evidence of a prostration of moral integrity among the people. Integrity of principle and a good moral character, should be esteemed as indispensable qualities in a man to be raised to office. Here the friends of order and morality should unite, though all their individual views and personal friendships might not be fully met in it. I own to you, that to witness in any instance a neglect of this course of conduct, and the promotion of men without moral principle, deeply affects my feelings. Not because of the influence an individual alone can exert, but because of the evidence it affords, that the people are so lost to a sense of the importance of moral integrity, that they may co-operate with such influence in the destruction of all that can render a nation respected and happy. If intrigue, and dissimulation, and corruption of every kind can be overlooked in a man, who is labouring his way up to some eminent place in the public councils, it will loose its odiousness in the private concerns of life; and, in case the profligate and profane are raised to posts of honor and profit, the multitude will find in it an excuse, if not a positive reason, for an indulgence in these crimes. My brethren, we are bound by every possible consideration, to exert all the influence we have against these portentous evils. They are causes which in the course of nature, operate very extensively in the desolation of morality and virtue. And it is with the better part, (who are yet, thank God, the controlling part,) of the community, to say whether they shall prevail, or perish in the struggle. May the Father of all our mercies give us wisdom and grace, to succeed in our efforts to promote happiness on earth, and secure an inheritance in heaven.

2. Our subject calls on us to unite in suppressing all those practices and habits of immorality, in individuals, which tend to corrupt and degrade society.

In proportion as these prevail, and obtain an influence in different circles, they weaken the efficacy of our institutions. Let a corrupt feeling predominate in the community, and array itself against the best institutions in the world, and it will triumph. Their ruin is inevitable. Should their forms continue, they would be of no avail. They would be appealed to in vain, when no longer respected by a majority of the people. A corruption of public morals, then,

is the result of a predominating influence of immorality in the spirit and practice of individuals. In touching upon those practices and habits, a few only will be mentioned. These I notice particularly, because of their pernicious consequences and alarming progress.

It is not from a slight attention to its almost uniform results, that I have long considered the profanation of the sabbath, a corrupting vice. Perhaps it is fit that God should cause it to be attended with such palpably deleterious effects, because the duty to keep the day to HIM, is a subject of faith more than almost any other moral precept. But whatever be the cause, the fact is undeniable, that he who commences his career in sabbath breaking, usually closes it in misery and disgrace. I do not remember ever to have read the confession of a criminal before his execution, who did not trace the beginnings of his wicked course to this practice.

Had I time, the importance of the subject would justify me in calling your attention to the evidences by which the divinity of the institution is supported. But I have not. I will only say, if it be not divine, to me it appears to be useless, if not worse than useless. The theory which allows it only a civil sanction, and which is perhaps the cause of the prevailing laxity of feeling respecting the observance of it, assigns no satisfactory reason for it as a matter of mere human policy. That labourers and servants should have intervals of relaxation, and the sanctuary of religion a portion of our time devoted to its service, proves indeed the utility of the institution. But evidence of its utility is no argument against its divinity. If there be no moral force in the injunction, "remember the sabbath day to keep it *holy*," it returns successively, as only a day of recreation to those who choose to make it such. The minister of religion has no foundation to enforce an observance of it by discipline, nor any hold upon the consciences of those who profane it, for reproof or censure. And it is very questionable, removing the moral obligation to keep it, whether the magistrate has a right to forbid any, who feel disposed to labour on that day. What is a sabbath, then, in the minds of those who view it in this light, but an interval of mere pastime, without any thing to direct their conduct, except the custom of the people, founded on what the more pious have consented to adopt, as best suited to their convenience? But what regard do the careless have for such custom or convenience, when exempted from reproof and admonition, on the ground of the sinfulness of sabbath-breaking? Their conduct respecting it, under even such a restraint, will tell you.

Remove this restraint, then, and the sabbath becomes a day of idleness or dissipation. Placing all in the same condition on the same day, it becomes an occasion for the profligate and licentious to lead their associates into snares, intrigues, gambling and every species of vice ; and thus to spread their corrupting influence through the community. Nothing, I am satisfied, nothing but to enforce the observance of the sabbath as a religious duty, as it really is, can save the cause of morality from suffering by the very existence of the institution. But as an institution ordained of God to be a blessing to society, the observance of it will render us happy. Parents, if you would preserve your children from ruin, prevent them from profaning the sabbath. Let all who love God, and regard the cause of morality, recommend it by precept and example, as a day to be kept "holy unto the Lord."

Sabbath-breaking and drunkenness are kindred crimes. He who indulges in the one, soon becomes a slave to the other. And what a pest to society is a confirmed drunkard ! How destructive to the cause of good morals ! Like sabbath-breaking, drunkenness is a social vice. There is a double influence which operates in the promotion of this pernicious practice. The avarice of the retailer, who often finds means to admit hordes of idle wanderers into their haunts, even on the Lord's day ; and the inclination of such wanderers, who have acquired habits which will lead them there through every obstacle. Each associate becomes a corrupter of others, as he advances in the progressive degrees of the horrid art, until all who come within the reach of their influence, are hurried into the dreadful vortex. What must be the strength of this influence, when even professors of religion are carried away in it ? I speak it to the shame, I hope the conviction and remorse, of those who are guilty. May the God of infinite mercy pity them ! Would you trace the depths of this contaminating vice, go to the abodes of drunkards, and you shall see to the fullest extent what is meant by "the abodes of wretchedness." The morals of a rising family ruined. Children in idleness, following the footsteps of a profligate father, and forming circles of their own, to corrupt all of their neighborhood, whom they can decoy into their associations, and influence to habits of pilfering and petty frauds. You may see broken hearted mothers, drenched in tears, and drowned in sorrow. You may see growing clans, preparing to howl about your streets, and interrupt your walks, and invade your houses. You may see every thing which can excite your pity, and alarm your fears. But the depth of the evil you cannot measure. It shoots into eternity, descends into the pit, and eludes the power of calculation, as it sinks its subjects into the darkness of an eternal hell.

But what human means can be employed to reform the confirmed drunkard ? None.—Nothing but a miracle of grace can restore him to the reason of a man. He is a voluntary maniac, and beyond your reach, because he is "past feeling." As well might you reason with the tem-

pest, or harangue the ocean in a storm. He will drink, though his family perish of hunger and cold. Amidst the groans of dying friends, he will rummage the shelves for his bottle, and sink down under the stupifying draught upon the floor which holds up the remains of a deceased relative. No dangers or alarms will deter him. In the face of the grim monster, he will pay his devotions to Bacchus, and feed the fire he has created within upon the bed of death. It is no fiction. I have witnessed it with indescribable emotions, and turned from the scene in despair of the recovery of old transgressors, from the delirium and consequent destruction of this baneful practice. How appalling the thought! But why dwell upon this subject, if prospects are so gloomy? Because there are degrees in the commencement of intemperance, within the limits of which the subjects of it may be prevailed on to hear and forbear.—But especially because it is a prevailing and contagious vice, and calls for the united efforts of all good men to arrest its progress. Look round you, and count the number of your acquaintance who have gone, or are fast going, into this destructive practice. In some of them, pride of character, the last hope of anxious friends, has already fallen a victim to the rage of appetite. You never think of them, but with all those sensations which alarming calamities bring to the mind. Intelligence that they had a confirmed consumption, would have less excited your pity for their families, than your knowledge of the fact that they are confirmed in habits of intemperance. You look forward to the mortifications, and afflictions, and living woes of their friends, nor will you be deceived. Look at the wretch who staggers over yonder green on every public day. Once perhaps he had the spirit of a man. He was called citizen, husband, father—and spoke of these relations with intelligence and feeling. But he has renounced his place among men, to grovel with the brute, and wallow with the swine. Such is the degradation to which this vice reduces man, the noblest work of God! And shall nothing be done to prevent its progress, while it is spreading like fire in stubble? Much, my brethren—my christian friends—much must be done; or all our prospects will wither and perish under the wasting influence of this single practice. To prescribe does not come within the limits of my present purpose. Perhaps nothing short of a direct or virtual prohibition, upon the panders and perpetrators of this crime, will prove effectual. If not, the object decidedly outweighs every consideration that can be urged against the means to accomplish it. As an article of merchandize, that yields a miserable revenue to any country, for which every dollar that is paid, is virtually a direct tax upon the people; and especially when it is universally deleterious to the health, the happiness, and even the wealth of the community—if no other means can be rendered efficacious, I most devoutly pray to see the time when the liberties of rum dealers shall be brought within limits less extended, if possible, than the liberties of the press in the most despotic countries.

As an integral portion of the union, your state has taken a laudable step in this work. My object is to encourage you to persevere in it. I know the difficulties you have to encounter. Even drunkards have their friends, and interested friends, who have the courage to array themselves against the legislator and the magistrate, to whom they impute the restriction of their licentious liberties. But it is the courage of desperation. Let their arts be understood, and there is yet virtue enough in the public to defend the faithful supporter of morality and religion against them. Good men will yield every other consideration, to unite in suppressing such a corrupt collusion. He who has disqualified himself for doing any good to his family or community, ought to be prevented from doing harm. His mischievous influence should be averted ; and his apologists and supporters marked as the enemies of good morals, and shunned as the corrupters of society. Otherwise the contagion may yet reach the magistracy itself, and you may see obsequious members of your police, stealing through the twilight to the by-doors of gambling houses and grog shops, while no voice is heard to say from within, "justice cannot enter." Should the evil spread to such an extent, the die is cast, and we shall inevitably descend the horrible declivity, into utter ruin.

Profane swearing, though it may seem to be less deleterious, is not less offensive to a moral community, than sabbath-breaking and intemperance. He who indulges in it, is offensive in every polite circle, because he is vulgar ; in every religious circle, because he dishonors God ; in every patriotic circle, because he proves his want of integrity and moderation. The very circumstance of a gratuitous appeal to God on the most trifling occasions, produces an involuntary impression that they who indulge in it are conscious of the need of such an appeal, to render their word valid. But, aside from the consideration of its impiety, as a breach of the plain command, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," it has a tendency to corrupt public morals, and endanger the safety and happiness of community. "Because of swearing," says the scriptures, "the land mourneth." Perhaps false swearing was intended. But false swearing is the natural offspring of profane swearing, and the most effectual way to prevent the one, is to suppress the other. Let the name of God be revered as it would be if this vice were generally viewed in its truly odious light, and it would never be taken for civil purposes without a solemnity of feeling essential to the proper sanction of an oath. But when this sacred name is used with more familiarity than any other, and impiously bandied about at every turn of wit, or anger, or contempt, or other prevailing passion, it naturally loses its sanctity in the feelings of the transgressors, and may be taken by them on the most interesting occasions without any distinct consciousness of the solemn responsibilities under which they are brought by it. Profanely, then, my brethren, "swear not at all." By the love of virtue, and the regard you have for the

safety and happiness of society, employ your utmost efforts to counteract the influence of this corrupting vice.

To this part of our subject I will add one reflection more. I have already suggested that whatever tends to weaken the sympathies of our nature, and familiarize us to scenes of massacre, is destructive to good morals and dangerous to the interests of community. In the strength and vigor of these sympathies, is our security for the maintenance and execution of those laws which guard our lives and happiness. Let it once occur, that bloody tragedies can be witnessed among us with as much composure as murders and human immolations are witnessed in barbarous and heathen countries, and it will be attended with similar consequences.

Whatever may be said of other causes, the final dissolution of the liberties of Rome was more effectually aided by a gradual destruction of the relative sympathies, than any one means besides. The oppressions practised upon the plebeians by the imperious patricians, constrained them to repeated acts of desperation to recover their rights, and continually agitated the country with civil broils; and the perpetual jealousies among the contending parties, occasioned a constant succession of vindictive punishments for reputed seditions and treasonable designs, without respect to rank, condition, or the most sacred ties of kindred and family. Turmoil and carnage were almost constantly before their eyes, covered with the false habiliments of honor and patriotism, until they were hardened to endure them without emotion or disgust. Thus prepared by a total prostration of moral sensibility in the people, which their constant course of conduct had effected, the cruel Sylla found it practicable to butcher the patriotic enemies of his designs with impunity; and, in defiance of the Senate or wiser people, who were stunned with the incessant groans of the sufferers, to induce servants to massacre their masters, and children their parents, for a paltry sum as a reward of murder and parricide! Here the liberties of the republic sunk and disappeared forever! It was this very nation that the Apostle designed to pourtray in his masterly description of a deeply depraved people, as "being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity;—haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:—whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in all their ways; the way of peace they have not known; and there is no fear of God before their eyes." Such is the state of the human affections in ruin!

It must ever be esteemed as a sufficient reason why a dissolution of our republic cannot be justly inferred from the example of others, that such a spirit has not been promoted in it. Faction has never succeeded to blood. It early appeared, indeed, but innocently passed away without leaving a

visible trace of its footsteps. Our sedition laws have existed almost if not entirely without application. And the sympathies of our nature are cherished by the very spirit of our institutions. But are we therefore, safe from the influence of that depravity which exists coeval with sin, and every where struggles for an ascendancy over virtue? As the worst of consequences result from causes which are slow and insidious in their progress, whatever is symptomatic and portentous of evil, demands the early attention of the friends of good morals. What shall we say, then, of those bloody tragedies, superciliously denominated "affairs of honor?" Our object requires that we notice them principally as they are calculated to affect society.

Duelling is a crime involving so many of the corrupt passions, that none can safely predict the extent of its ravages, where it is permitted to obtain. I know the responsibility of attacking a vice which has the support of distinguished names; and I know too the certain success of that vice under the protection of such support, if the bold, unflinching voice of the people be not raised against it. We see our young men falling in our streets, and our aged men hurried from our councils and the service of our country by this fashionable vice. Again and again, we are admonished to mark its strides towards our own peaceful region. It is fresh in your recollection, that from causes which commenced within the precincts of the institution where your sons are forming sentiments to govern their conduct in future life, a young man has just fallen by the hand of one of his fellows. Who can say how far the rash appellant has diffused his proud notions of honor, to affect the feelings of our brothers, and sons, and the youth of our neighborhoods? Is this a time to be silent? While the cloud lowers in angry aspect, and approaches your sacred homes, will you not unitedly face the storm to prevent its desolations? Already it has been insinuated, that we must yield to the practice of duelling, because the prejudices in which it is founded cannot be subdued. Merciful God! it is the appalling signal for a surrender of virtue to crime—crime, whose triumph is national odium, and career national ruin! Allow it impunity, because of the rank and influence of its perpetrators—throw around it the fictitious drapery of *honor*, and raise its apologists to posts of dignity and power in the community, and the work of desolation is fairly commenced. Here the whole train of vindictive heroes will find an honorable excuse for personal revenge; and while they dare not kill as assassins, they will as gentlemen. Here the demagogue will find means to remove out of his way a worthy citizen, whose virtues and integrity may be deemed impediments against his designs of personal aggrandizement. By this high road, consecrated to the name of honor, the daring adventurer may drive his way through every obstacle, into the sanctuary of justice, or up to the chair of state, while his hands are yet reeking with innocent blood, and his heart is yet burning with its vindictive rancour. Can the name of honor cleanse those hands and purify that heart?

Success in such an enterprize would render the practice the surest means of preferment, and promote it in every grade of society, until massacre would no longer shock the feelings, or the groans of the dying, awaken the sympathies of surrounding spectators. Thank God, we are not prepared to admit such a state of things, while any means are left us to guard against it. I know too well your prevailing feelings to doubt it for a moment. Were you permitted to expostulate with an aspiring advocate of duelling, in a single voice uniting in it the sentiments and feelings which pervade the whole, I know how you would reprove his errors and confute his reasonings. You would appeal to his conscience, to his humanity, to his patriotism and even to his boasted honor and ambitious prospects. You would point him to a day, when the successful adventurer must account to God for ushering into the presence of his judge a fellow-being, in a state least prepared for so awful an event; and remind him of the accumulated woes it must bring upon himself and the whole circle of the friends of his unhappy antagonist. Should he insinuate that personal bravery is commendable, and that a man in public life depends for success upon maintaining his honor, you would tell him in reply, that a moral people do not consider a man's honor vindicated, but deeply stained by crime; that duelling is the result of a mean timidity, which cannot endure the sneers of the giddy and vain, or of a revengeful heart which, uncovered, would disclose the rancour of a murderer; and that he who is swayed by such influence, has neither courage, nor honor, nor the reason of a man. You would put it to himself to say, as a jurist and a statesman, whether the practice can consist with the oath of office in any important station in public life; whether it be not an infringement of the rights of justice as defined and limited by the Constitution of our country, and whether it must not, from its nature, disqualify a man for the very object by which he professes to be influenced in the vindication of his honor. You would appeal to his reason, whether a humane, moral people, would willingly submit their interests to a man whose rage could be provoked by a trifle, to such desperate acts. Should he attempt to palliate the crime, by insinuating that the duellist places himself in the way of danger; you would ask him what assassin does not? what bloody enterprize is conducted without danger? You would remind him by a thousand examples, that the strength of malice and ambition can easily triumph over fear; that the duellist calculates as little on suffering from the danger to which he exposes himself, as the highwayman does; and that if it were not so, the crime cannot be divested of its turpitude by any circumstances of hazard. If he should remain invincible, you would turn from him in pity and contempt, recommending him to the mercy of his God, and the neglect of the public. In the prevalence of these sentiments, which your character and conduct authorize me to ascribe to you, is our security against the desolating consequences of this species of crime. But let not our supposed security prove our ruin. There are crimes

which are too generally not considered alarming, until they are uncontrollable; and this is one of those crimes. It calls for decided and timely opposition, to arrest its progress and stay its proud waves.

3. Finally, pure religion is essential to the prevalence of a correct morality. I mean a religion of the heart—a religion which inspires its subjects with a distinct consciousness of the presence and government of God and their accountability to Him. How deplorable would be the state of the world without it? Christ said to his Apostles, “Ye are the salt of the earth.” They were denominated such because of the salutary influence of their moral and religious virtues. Suppose a community totally destitute of such religious influence, saying, as “the fool hath said in his heart there is no God;” what would be the amount of correct morality in it?

The best moralists of antiquity saw and felt the need of a teacher who could bring his doctrine to bear efficiently upon the hearts and consciences of the people. In the “Desire of Nations,” we have that teacher. His “word is quick and powerful—a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Although all sinners are not professedly infidels—in fact very few of them—yet universal observation proves that a prevailing depravity, to a certain extent, performs the work of infidelity. The spring of habitual action is in the heart, which is “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” The affections will take the lead. And when business employs the mind or temptation assails it, and we are least prepared to act from judgment, then we are thrown upon the current of feeling which directs all our conduct. How feeble are the restraints upon our passions and inclinations at such a time? We forget God, or act as though we believed there was none. So far as the influence of this depravity affects our conduct, it is the same to us as if we had joined the club, who say “there is no God.” Remembering the awful denunciations against the nations that forget God, and the examples of their fulfilment, we should never lose sight of the importance of piety, to render public morals efficient, in promoting national happiness and prosperity.

Every individual who is brought into an experience of true piety, is an acquisition to the cause of public morality. How important is it, then, to give every possible facility to the means which God has ordained to promote evangelical holiness. The institutions of religion can never be placed on a better footing than they are generally in this country. Each separate society is enabled, by the laws provided for the regulation of such societies, to enforce all the rational obligations upon its members which are necessary for the management of its temporal concerns; and all matters of conscience are left, as they should be, between the individual and his God. Religion requires no further legal interference of the civil authority. The benefit it looks for from magistrates, and all others, is their personal exertions, rendered more or less efficacious by the degree

of influence their rank in society gives to those exertions. Upon this broad basis, our subject invites us to an union of effort, to promote the general object of universal piety and happiness. The doctrinal differences and discrepancy of forms which exist among the different denominations of christians, do not necessarily form a barrier against such union. If they do incidentally, it is in consequence of an error of proceeding, respecting such differences. On points in which men do not agree, it is hypocritical to pretend that they do. And to denounce honest discussions of doctrinal points, as hostile to the spirit of harmony among christians of different names, is to prevent the possibility of a nearer approach to union, by suppressing the only means which can be justly employed to influence the mind on subjects of opinion; and lays a foundation to indulge unfriendly feelings in a ease which is suited in every respect to the exercise of true liberality. Let all christians be fully instructed on the subject of doctrines, that they may act intelligibly in the choice they make, and not be exposed to disputations respecting the nature of the systems they adopt. Let them be reminded that all attempts at uniformity, where it does not exist in the mind, except by rational argument, is assuming to dictate the conscience, and does not come within the province of any human being; and that christians should, therefore, discuss their doctrinal differences in that spirit of religious harmony which is perfectly consistent with it.

The union of effort to which christians are called, requires that we distinguish men for their diligence and success in promoting the cause of piety, and give to such our firm support by every suitable encouragement. Conducted on the principles of a sound morality, the only well adapted law of nations, our diplomatic commissions will sustain an energy and influence which will secure us against the encroachments of foreign enemies. Our citizens will be respected as the friends of humanity and justice in every country. And the stranger will find here an asylum from the oppressive hand of tyranny. Then shall we witness the saying of the Lord fulfilled in our own happy land; "and the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee;—therefore thy gates shall be open continually,—that men may bring unto thee the forces of the gentiles, and that kings may be brought; for the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish. The glory of Lebanon shall be brought unto thee;—the sons also of them that afflicted thee, shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee, shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israël; whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated,—I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations." For "righteousness exalteth a nation." Already we see the beginnings of these happy events. When a Pope refuses to establish the Inquisition, not from any personal opposition to it, but because the light beaming out from the sun of liberty which has arisen

upon this western hemisphere, renders it impracticable ; when the allied despots tremble with solicitude ; and when the oppressed Greeks in the heart of Europe, responding to every note of liberty wafted from these shores, break their chains and assert their rights, we are authorized to consider the events as ominous of a triumphant march and permanent establishment of the cause of freedom and virtue.

Who can recount the manifest interpositions of Providence in settling the affairs of this republic in a manner which no human wisdom could devise or power effect, and not be deeply impressed with a belief that God has had in it some great design of mercy towards the nations of the earth ? The bible and the missionary, coming from a people respected for their integrity and benevolence, will succeed and diffuse light and truth wherever they go. In vain shall despots denounce, and popes hurl the thunders of their bulls at them. God is on their side, and the means he has ordained for their success, at their right hand. No weapon formed against them shall prosper. They shall succeed in their work of mercy, until "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God, as the waters cover the sea." O happy day ! when

"Jesus shall reign where e'er the sun,
 "Does his successive journeys run ;
 "His kingdom spread from shore to shore,
 "Till moons shall wax and wane no more."

Respected Rulers, though I do not assume to say a word to you on the subject of your official duties, suffer me to remind you, that the confidence the people have reposed in you, and the strong hold you have upon their affections, enable you to exert an extensive influence in promoting the cause of piety and good morals. Their use to society, in rendering us, as a nation, and our children after us, respected and happy, will, I know, be a sufficient inducement to encourage you in this work. But patriotism cannot save the soul. It is washed and fitted for heaven only by the blood and merits of Jesus Christ. To his blood and merits I invite you. Their efficacy is freely offered to all, through repentance and faith in his name. While "godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come," the good man is grateful for the former, but stays his soul upon the latter. He looks forward for substantial happiness, to "a kingdom which cannot be moved."

The events of every returning year remind us of the importance of being constantly ready for our last change. Though the scene goes on, the actors change in quick succession. You are reminded on this occasion, that some have left the stage since your last anniversary meeting. The erudite Judge and the sage Senator are no more ! Your Swift and your Boardman are dead ! The recital of their names calls past scenes to your recollection, and awakens the sensibilities of your hearts. But there is a

more interesting voice in the dispensation. It is the voice of God, saying to every one of us, "be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." What mean these sable badges which appear in every part of my congregation, and reflect upon the imagination so gloomy a prospect? They are the tokens of mourning for departed friends. While we "weep with those that weep," let us prepare for the solemn event, which awaits us at an hour at most not far distant. As citizens, we are admonished by the importance of piety and virtue, to act in our several capacities with a reference to the glory of God, and the happiness of society. Each one may contribute something towards the general object of universal peace and happiness; and none should so degrade themselves by neglecting it, as to have it said after their death, that they had lived in vain. As ministers of the gospel, we are admonished, my brethren, by every consideration to labor—not merely to preach—but to *labor* for God and the prosperity of his cause. Perhaps there is not so great a deficiency of *ministers* as has been imagined; but of *laborers* there undoubtedly is; and can we expect that the christian public will be interested on this subject, if we loiter about the walls of Zion, while we make "loud and long" appeals to them to assist in furnishing others to "build up the waste places?" They will justly reply to such appeals in the well adapted language of the master of the vineyard, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" Nor will the excuse, that "no man hath hired us," sufficiently correspond with our professions, to satisfy the candid of our sincerity. May the God of all grace bless and save us, for Christ's sake—AMEN.

